

MINISTER RICHARD P. BUTRICK

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is March 25, 1993. This is an interview with Richard P. Butrick on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. I would like to start this off with a bit about your background...where and when you were born, etc.

BUTRICK: I was born in Lockport, New York in 1894. I was an only child. I went to school in Lockport Union School and graduated from the high school department in 1913. Then I went into the Bureau of Fisheries and served in New York State and Colorado.

Q: Was this the United States Bureau of Fisheries?

BUTRICK: Yes, the United States Bureau of Fisheries. Later on through examination I obtained a position in Washington and was in the Auditor's Office. I worked for some time there. I took courses at the beginning of the Foreign Service School in Georgetown. I more or less self-educated myself in Spanish until I became fluent enough to pass the consular examination in Spanish which was a two day and rather stiff examination. I was one of the few that passed it. I entered the Consular Service. Along with me were Willard Beaulac, John Muccio and Fletcher Warren, making up the four who entered the Consular Service at that time. Warren, Beaulac and myself, as vice consuls, and John Muccio had some title a little lower than that because he was a little younger than the rest of us.

My first post was in Valparaiso, Chile.

Q: You were there from 1921-22.



BUTRICK: Well, not that long. It was a "break-in" post for me and I learned a lot of practical matters there. As an example, I acquired a hand gun and it was necessary to register it in the mayoralty. There were 7 men and 3 women in the secretariat waiting in the reception room. I strode up to the receptionist and explained what I wanted. He arose and said loudly, "el senor Vice Consul Americano desea permiso para llevar su pistota." The 7 men broke out in raucous laughter. The 3 women bowed their heads and smiled. I asked the Secretary, "Enrique, what in the world did I say?" He replied, "You asked for a permit to carry your penis." He then issued me a "certificado para cargar revolver." After about six months, I was transferred to Iguique to take over from the consul who was going on home leave.

At Iguique, which was an active seaport, the climate was mild year 'round. It never rained, but often clouded up as though it was about to rain. Often passengers on British ships would come ashore with their umbrellas. The children would look at them and say: "esta lloviendo en Londres."

I had a room in the consulate but ate all meals at the local hotel. Often, I would call the waiter and have him change my soup because it had a fly in it which he always gracefully did. After many such occasions, I finally decided it was simpler to flick the fly out myself and enjoy the soup. In other ways I found it simpler and more effective to adjust to local customs and habits and this stood me in good stead throughout my career.

One of my friends was a Swiss who worked for W.R. Grace & Co. He was fluent in 5 languages. One day I lauded him for this accomplishment. He replied, "Dick, it is much less worse to be a fool in one language than in five." I never forgot that, which reminds me of a remark attributed to President Truman who characterized the State Department as being "a bunch of over-educated fools".

At Iguique I met John B. Faust, a chemist at a nitrate plant in the high pampas. Several years later in Washington he introduced me to a charming girl, Gretchen Daniel, who became my wife and later the mother of our two children, Ann and Dick Jr., both born in Shanghai. (Gretchen died of cancer in 1945. Early in 1937 I married Rachel Davies, who among other accomplishments is tri-lingual in English, Spanish and Welsh.)

I served in Iguique for several months and was then transferred to Guayaquil, Ecuador where I served for two and a half years, most of the time in charge of the Consulate General.

There were three of us in the office and the three of us ran it. I did the economic reporting and general representation. I knew all the authorities and was friendly with them. One of my assistants, an American citizen, took care of citizenship matters for Americans, and the third person, who was an Ecuadorian, took care of the consular invoices and the routine operations of the office. The three of us ran it. I suppose today in Guayaquil one would probably have fifty or even a hundred people to run it.



Q: You were there from 1923-26.

BUTRICK: Yes. Then I came home on vacation. A new Consul General came to Guayaquil and he came at the good season of the year and was quite pleased with the place on the whole.

As far as living conditions were concerned it was a hell hole if there ever was one. I have written something on it which I can give you...

Q: Yes, I would like to have it.

BUTRICK: ...to give you an idea of what Guayaquil was like in those days.

Q: Well, Thomas Nast, the famous cartoonist died there.

BUTRICK: Yes, he died there and the wife of the consul general that I succeeded died there of yellow fever. They also had bubonic plague there. But at the time I arrived the Rockefeller Institute had sent a member to Guayaquil to eradicate yellow fever, and he did it. The principal thing in eradicating yellow fever was to get rid of the anopheles mosquito which the man from the Rockefeller Institute found was being propagated in the interior water tanks over the toilets which were open on the top. So he had them all covered. That was a big item in eradicating yellow fever.

My period of service there was an active one. I sent a radio report in every week to the Department about the cacao market, which was the principal cacao market of the world at that time. And generally speaking took care of everything else including representation with the local authorities as well as contact with the Embassy.

On one occasion I was able to go on vacation to Riobamba and while there I called on the local officials, including the military man. He told me that on the following Saturday he had received orders to keep everybody in barracks. That occurred to me to be very pertinent information and I took the first available train to Guayaquil and sent a message in code to the Embassy indicating that there was a possibility of a coup on the following Saturday. And actually the coup did occur and the Embassy had been forewarned by me. I received a highly commendatory letter from the Embassy.

Q: That is one of the great moments of anybody in the Foreign Service to be able to predict a coup.



BUTRICK: I traveled somewhat through the countryside too on horseback to Cuenca and other places. So I was quite busy there. Also one of the outstanding things was to settle the estate of a Virgin Islander who kept a small grocery there and died of bubonic plague. This worried me quite a bit, but after two or three days I got over that. Fortunately I didn't catch the plague.

Q: How about shipping and seaman? Were there problems?

BUTRICK: Well, we had some problems with seamen and shipping. The governor of the province was in Guayaquil. We had a seaman who came ashore and was arrested and I found out about it later on, I didn't know about it at the time. So I went to the governor and spoke to him about it. He said, "Oh, that is quite all right, we will fix that right away." And he did. He released the man that afternoon. And he said to me, "Oh, by the way, I have a pony that I would like to ship up to the railroad." The railroad was built and controlled by an American company. I said, "I will see what I can do about it." So I arranged for the railroad to have his pony shipped up country free of charge.

Q: A little quid pro quo.

BUTRICK: Exactly.

Q: I was a consular officer for many years and know this is exactly what you do.

BUTRICK: My relationship with the community and everybody else was extremely friendly. It was a small community. It was a terrible situation locally, physically, and everybody realized that and we all got along together very well, including the Ecuadorians who were very fine people. I had many interesting experiences there, but I won't recount them.

Q: If you have time I would like to hear some of them.



BUTRICK: Well, I perfected my colloquial Spanish in Guayaquil. One day while at the Club, where I was usually the only foreigner present, and sitting around the table with four or five Ecuadorians discussing the phonograph records of that era. How you adjusted the needle, how sharp a needle should be, whether it should be tight or loose, if the record was a little bit uneven how you played it, and the speed you played it and all this sort of thing. I thought to myself, "Why in the world are these people talking at such length about records?" Finally it occurred to me that they were not talking about phonograph records at all, they were talking about sex...in terms of a phonograph record!

Q: This is the sort of thing that is not taught at the normal school in the United States.

BUTRICK: They were always playing or plotting games of some sort at the Club. One time there was an Ecuadorian warship in the harbor and they got the idea that they could take over the warship, the four of them. And they really did. They went out and when the captain met them on the gangplank and took them to his room, they bound and gagged him and took over the warship. They held it for about three days and then got off very peacefully. They were arrested and held for a while but they were from affluent families and nothing came of it. But it was amazing that they had arranged all of that rather openly in the Club.

There were other things that were very amusing, but life on the whole was not very pleasant on account of all the insects, especially the grillos that came in the thousands.

Q: Grillos are...?

BUTRICK: A form of cricket. Even the streets were covered with them. When the automobiles would go along the street they would crack as you went over them. They could get into your house no matter how tightly you had it screened. We also had scorpions and all kinds of insects. The kitchen at night when I would come home would be a menagerie. There would be rats running around, scorpions and all kinds of insects in the kitchen of the home where I lived, which was attached to the office. So it was a pretty tough life.

Q: Did they give you any extra pay for going to a post like that in those days?

BUTRICK: Well, you got time and a half towards retirement. I didn't get any extra pay. I served in unhealthy posts for a great deal of my early career. I accumulated considerable time so that I could have retired much earlier than I did. But I never got an extra penny of pay.



Q: Could I go back just for a moment to the School of Foreign Service? What attracted you to the School for Foreign Service and could you talk a little bit about Father Walsh and the atmosphere?

BUTRICK: I was living at a boarding house and there was a young chap, a southern boy, who said to me one day, "Dick, why don't you take the examination for the Consular Service? I am going to take it." I said, "Well, I better see what I can do about that." He said, "Yeah, you better." So I then learned about the Foreign Service School that Father Walsh was starting and I was among the early participants in the school. There were others besides us who went into the Consular Service. Father Walsh was an extremely fine man. I have forgotten the name of the man who taught us international law but he was very well known at the time too. All in all it was most interesting. I took French there and was not very good at it. I had a little talk with Father Walsh about my French which was rated rather lowly on my score card and I found him to be very considerate and everything, but he couldn't possibly change my rating. So I continued with my Spanish and that was the language which I took when I took the two day examination for the Consular Service.

We had one man who came in morning dress driving up in a chauffeured limousine to take the examination. He had been in the diplomatic service abroad and was coming back to take the examination. He did not pass and I did pass.

Q: How were classes conducted at the school?

BUTRICK: There were lectures and we had to take examinations as we went along. I have forgotten all the details. It was upstairs in a building downtown around 7th Street. It was not on the hill at Georgetown. The course, if I remember rightly, was about two years.

Q: Did Father Walsh teach?

BUTRICK: Father Walsh was there all the time. He taught some of the courses, but not all of them.

Q: Who were the students? Were they mostly older?

BUTRICK: No, they were all younger people like myself, all in their '20s.

Q: From what you said I take it you did not go to college?



BUTRICK: I had not been to college. Some of the others had.

Q: How did the students who came in with you do for the most part? Were they mostly aiming for the Diplomatic or Consular Service?

BUTRICK: I don't think so because very few of them went in to the Services. They went elsewhere, possibly with private firms operating abroad.

Q: Well, then we will move on. You left Guayaquil in 1926.

BUTRICK: While I was on temporary duty in the Department, Homer Byington who was chief of personnel called me into his office one day and said...First I was to go to St. John, New Brunswick, to take over from the consul up there who was causing trouble and refusing to leave the post. I was sent up there to relieve him. I had quite a time, I had to handle him very diplomatically because he was a big former football player at the University of Minnesota. It was quite a ticklish job. He finally decided that he would come back to Washington and try to straighten out things, but I think he was discharged, not allowed to stay on.

Then I came back to Washington again. I am not quite sure how these things fit in but anyway, Byington called me into the office one day and said, "We have received a request from China for the assignment of six men. We have carefully chosen them and you are one of them." Well, I was very bucked up by that. I thought that was wonderful, being chosen among six people. So that is how I went to China. Many years later on I found out that the real reason why we had been selected for China was that the Department was short of funds and we were all bachelors so they did not have to send out families.

Q: So this was in 1926 that you were sent to China.

BUTRICK: Yes, I think so. I went to Hangzhou.

Q: Do you recall at all what happened, the feelings...the Foreign Service Act, the Rogers Act, was signed in 1924 and you were in the Consular Service. How did you feel about the Foreign Service?

BUTRICK: We were inducted into the Foreign Service.

Q: Did you think it was a good thing or a bad thing?



BUTRICK: We thought it was a good thing, but we weren't really affected very much by it because our salaries remained the same, etc. But it did offer a career which probably the old Consular Service did not because the Diplomatic Service was separate in those days. The Diplomatic Service was all appointed, one didn't take an examination for entry.

Q: When you were in the Consular Service what was your feeling towards the Diplomatic Service? Did you think they were a bunch of fancy boys or something?

BUTRICK: We had no particular feeling towards them that I can remember. We corresponded with the Embassy when we needed to. They didn't offer any oversight of us. We were completely independent so far as I can recall.

Q: You went to Hangzhou in 1926. I assume you went by ship.

BUTRICK: I crossed the Pacific by ship and then went up the river by ship too. When I went up the river, the Consul at Shanghai asked me to take some papers up to the Consul in Nanking. We were always taught that the consulate should be on the sea coast, so I expected this consulate to be near the river. When I got to Nanking it was not on the river, it was way back in the interior and I took a rickshaw to deliver the papers. I talked to him a little while and by the time I got back to the river, my boat had already left. There I was stuck. Fortunately we had a warship in the port of Nanking at the time and I went out to the warship and they kept me for three or four days until the next river boat came along.

Q: We had the Yangtze River Patrol there.

BUTRICK: Yes. So this destroyer, I think it was, was in Nanking at the time. They were nice and took me on and kept me until another boat came. I was left with nothing but a fountain pen. (At that time, the US Yangtze Patrol consisted of several ships, under the general control of a Vice Admiral.)

Q: What was the post like at Hangzhou and what was the situation there?



BUTRICK: In Hangzhou we occupied one building, a huge building. On the first floor were the offices, on the second floor all the bachelors had living quarters, and on the third floor was the Consul General's residence. The Consul General at that time was Frank Lockhart. So we were all quite happy there. It was a busy time. It was a time of much change because the Communist Chinese were coming up from the south. They came into Hangzhou while I was there.

Q: This was the long march?

BUTRICK: Part of the long march. We used to see Chinese walking along the Bund tied by a silk cord. They were taken by their captors out near the Hangzhou Club and all beheaded. Their heads were displayed on long poles so that all going to the Club could see them.

We were next to the old Russian consulate, which was by then occupied by the Chinese Communists. They also had a military group there and they used to exercise out in the yard of the former Russian consulate. They had a captain in charge of this company and he would march them back and forth and finally he got the idea of sitting down on one end of the marching area and directing them by a whistle. He had a whistle that he would blow and they would march back, etc.

We were right next door and overlooked this display. We had a chap named Russell Jordan who was with us. Russell was quite a character. He perceived the idea of getting a whistle and blowing it from a window upstairs. We did that and sure enough the troops all turned around and started marching the other way. We had a lot of fun with things like that. We were always up to some devilment.

It was a busy time. While we were there, the British concession was taken over by the Chinese. We were in the former Russian concession, ourselves, which no longer existed. Then we had the French concession and the Japanese concession in Hangzhou, but no American concession. But we still had extraterritoriality and were under American law. We had an American court there, as well as in Shanghai.

Q: Did you have anything to do with the court?

BUTRICK: No, I had nothing to do with the court in Hangzhou. We had nothing to do with the court in Shanghai either, although we were very friendly with the judge, Milton Helmick, and other members of the court.

So it was an exciting time. One time we slept on board ships in the harbor at night rather than staying in our homes because it wasn't safe to stay at home.



Q: Well, what was happening?

BUTRICK: The Communists were taking over.

Q: The Kuomintang...?

BUTRICK: If I recall correctly, and I am not sure that I do, the Kuomintang was taking over all of the British concession and we had all the British people in our consulate for a while with their trunks and all their baggage while they were trying to evacuate down to Shanghai on a boat. It was quite an exciting period of time. The French had their own little police force, all Annamese, under a French chief. The Japanese had their own police too.

Q: What type of work were you doing there?

BUTRICK: I was administrative officer for the entire office. Of course we had Chinese language officers that took care of the Chinese. We had Chinese writers, as they were called, because even our Chinese language officers could not correspond with the Chinese authorities in Chinese. We had to have Chinese writers who would do all that. They were a nice group. We had about six writers. There were as many of them as there were of us.

Q: Whom were we dealing with?

BUTRICK: We were dealing with the Chinese authorities there.

Q: Were they the Nationalists?

BUTRICK: They were the Nationalists at that time.

Q: Were there any problems that you can remember?



BUTRICK: No real problems. It was very amusing to me. I was recently arrived in Hangzhou and knew nothing about China. One of the officers was a son of a missionary, Gordon Burke was his name. Gordon spoke Chinese fluently because he had been brought up in China. One day he was going to the local branch of the Foreign Office...the Foreign Office in Peking had a branch in Hangzhou...and he said, "Dick, how would you like to come over to the Foreign Office with me?" I said, "Fine, I would love it." We had a case of a Standard Oil boat that had been forced to pay some levies on the river which they were not supposed to pay ...they call it likin. So he was going to complain about that and get back the money that they had paid.

We went over to the Foreign Office and he spoke to the man in charge there in Chinese. I suppose he was giving him greetings or something, I don't know what it was. Then they began discussing the case in English. It turned out that this man was a graduate of Princeton University and spoke English perfectly. In the course of the conversation this man deliberately lied and told a false story about the whole event. It didn't seem to bother Gordon at all.

Finally, the conversation was finished and we were walking back to the office which wasn't far away. I said, "Gordon, how did it go?" He said, "Oh, fine, fine." I said, "What do you mean fine. That man lied to you outright." "Oh, yes, he lied to me, that's all right. It doesn't make any difference." He said, adding, "He knows that he lied, he knows that I know that he lied, and he knows that I know that he knows that he lied. So it doesn't matter," and in reality so it was! Well, that was my introduction to China. I would not have understood at all what Gordon Burke readily understood.

Q: What about the missionaries? Did they cause a problem for the consulate, particular with the Communists in the hinterland?

BUTRICK: They got along as well as they could with people. They really didn't cause any trouble.

Q: What about our Yangtze River Patrol?

BUTRICK: They were a lot of fun. Sometimes the wives would come out and stay in Hangzhou, so we got to know the ladies quite well. We would see them at the club, playing golf. We had a very nice club in Hangzhou. The most unusual club I have ever seen in the world, for a country club. We had a race track, a nine hole golf course inside the race track, an eighteen hole golf course outside the race track, 12 or 15 tennis courts on grass, a swimming pool which was indoors and in winter was covered over and made into a ballroom.

Q: That made up for Guayaquil.



BUTRICK: That made up for Guayaquil, it certainly did. China was quite pleasant indeed. It was exciting and pleasant.

Q: You were in Hangzhou from 1926-32. At that time how did we get along with the Japanese?

BUTRICK: We got along fine with the Japanese. We were good friends. The Japanese consul general would have us out for parties, etc. and we would entertain them. We had no problems at all.

Q: Then you moved to Shanghai in 1932.

BUTRICK: Yes. I didn't go home because we had no home leave at government expense. You had to pay your own way if you went home. So I didn't go home until I had been in Hangzhou for four years. Then I went home and met in Washington the lady who became my wife. Then we went up to St. John...

Q: Again?

BUTRICK: No, I was mistaken, I didn't go earlier. You will have to go back and change that. As a matter of fact we were married in St. John.

Q: How long were you in St. John?

BUTRICK: Oh, a very short time. I couldn't have been there for more than four months.

Q: Then ...?

BUTRICK: Then I was brought back to Washington and sent out to Shanghai.

Q: You were in Shanghai from 1932-41. What were you doing there?

BUTRICK: I was the number two in the office and ran the office. We had a political reporter, Ed Stanton, and then we had some commercial reporters. The office was pretty well organized along those lines. Jack Service was also there. Jimmy Pilcher was there at that time too. The whole staff was highly competent.



Q: Things began to heat up with the Japanese while you were there.

BUTRICK: Yes, they did. You see the Japanese were at war with the Chinese before we got into war with them. It was very amusing because the International Settlement in Shanghai...there were various sectors of it...one was patrolled by the British, another was patrolled by the Japanese and another by the Italians, etc. So when the war broke out we used to see these British and Italian troops patrolling in the International Settlement although they were at war with each other.

Q: Prior to the breaking out of war, there was the International Settlement. Did this mean you had very little dealings with the Chinese authorities?

BUTRICK: We had dealings with the Chinese authorities too. I remember one case came before the settlement court about a Chinese who brought birds and chickens in huge big baskets. There was some rule that they could put only so many in a basket. We had a Chinese before the court one time because he had too many chickens in the basket. They put him on the stand to explain the whole thing and he said that so far as he was concerned it was not that he had too many chickens in the basket but that the basket was too small for the number of chickens he had to carry. That nearly floored the American judge. I don't remember how the case came out but remember that angle of it.

Q: What were our concerns in Shanghai at that time?

BUTRICK: There was quite a lot of American business, including the Standard Oil Company which was all over the country. Then we had other business organizations out there too. For example, the power plant in Shanghai was managed by an American. One of the big businesses in those days was tung oil which was brought down the river from up around Chungking. It was shipped to the United States. We had business with the Philippines too. It was a very busy port.

Q: Did you get involved in the suppression of the opium trade at all?

BUTRICK: No, I don't remember anything of that sort. I think the opium trade was pretty well over by that time. Although there were opium dens in Shanghai and the Chinese did go to them and smoke opium.



Q: What was our navy doing, the Patrol?

BUTRICK: They were to keep order and make sure that American ships...you see we had private American ships, Yangtze Rapid they called it, that carried cargo up and down the river too...from Chungking down to Shanghai. We had American businesses located along the river in smaller towns.

Q: When the Sino-Japanese war started in 1937, did that have much of an effect on us?

BUTRICK: Not to any appreciable extent. It was 1940 when I went out to China again as Counselor of Embassy at Chungking. When I was transferred from there to Peking, I was hoping the war would break out before I got to Peking so I wouldn't have to go there. But I did get to Peking and it didn't break out until three or four months afterwards.

Q: But the Chinese were already at war with Japan.

BUTRICK: The Japanese were in charge in Peking, for example. All of Peking was under Japanese control even though we had our Embassy branch office in Peking. Other countries had their branch offices there too, but their principal offices were in Chungking.

Q: Before we came into the war in 1941, when the Chinese and Japanese were fighting each other, did this have much of an effect on your work in Shanghai?

BUTRICK: No, I don't think the Japanese bothered us much at all. They certainly didn't bother us at all in Peking. But we didn't have much of an interest in Peking at that time anyway. The National City Bank was there and we had the university there which was run by Americans.

Q: Were you in China when the Japanese bombed the gunboat Panay?

BUTRICK: I remember the incident but can't remember just where I was...Hangzhou or Shanghai. I knew the Consul in Nanking at that time.

Q: Who took the wounded survivors from the ship, I think.

BUTRICK: I don't know the details of that.



Many of the British river boats had a toilet on the rear end of the boat. Some member of the royalty was out in China at that time interviewing people. This man had been shot and injured at the time of the Panay incident. She said to him, "Oh, my, how were you injured?" He said, "Well, Madam, I happened to be at the rear of the boat at the time and where I was shot if it had been you, you wouldn't have even been touched."

Q: Did the Japanese get nastier towards us when you were in Shanghai?

BUTRICK: They were pushy a little bit, but not nasty. They didn't like us coming into the Japanese area much at all.

Q: You went to Chungking around 1941. What were you doing up there?

BUTRICK: I was Counselor of Embassy. Mr. Gauss, who had been Consul General in Shanghai, was the Ambassador at that time. Then John Carter Vincent came afterwards and replaced me. He was a Chinese language officer. In Chungking I felt there was more need to know Chinese than in Shanghai, which was much more cosmopolitan.

Q: Chungking was not an international city in the way Shanghai was.

BUTRICK: That's right although many people spoke English, especially the officials. But the general public did not. So it was better to have people there like Jack Service who spoke Chinese fluently.

Q: So then you were sent to Peking where you served...?

BUTRICK: I relieved Bob Smyth, who came home on vacation and transfer.

Q: You were doing what in Peking?

BUTRICK: I was in charge of the office there.

Q: Now Peking was not the capital of China in those days. It had been Nanking and then had moved to Chungking.

BUTRICK: Peking, as I say, was sort of a branch office of the Embassy.



Q: Did you deal at all with the Chinese or only with the Japanese?

BUTRICK: There were some Chinese there who we dealt with, but the Japanese were in control of final decisions.

Q: Was there sort of the feeling among the Foreign Service there that eventually the United States was going to go to war?

BUTRICK: Oh, we thought that before I even got to Peking. I was hoping war would break out before I had to go to Peking because I thought for sure I would get caught in Peking...and I was.

Q: What happened to you when the war started?

BUTRICK: Well, we had to lower the flag. We had Marine guards at the Embassy and they were taken prisoners. The Japanese demanded that the colonel in charge of the Marines surrender, and he came to see me. We agreed that it was absolutely hopeless to resist, the Japanese could have killed every one of the Marines without any difficulty whatsoever. So he had to surrender. Then we had to lower the flag. There happened to be a Marine sergeant there and when the time came to lower the flag I said, "You go up and take down the flag and give it to me when you bring it back down." He said, "I have never lowered a flag this way." I said, "It is very simple. You just lower it and fold it up the best you can and bring it down." He went up and brought the flag down. I took it carefully in my arms and walked back through the crowd of mostly Japanese military to the office and kept it there. I kept the flag for four years and then low and behold I was sent out to China to reestablish our offices out there and I took the flag back with me and we raised the same flag over the Embassy that we had taken down four years earlier.

Q: How did the Japanese treat you?

BUTRICK: Well, we were on very friendly terms with the Japanese before the war broke out and we knew them. One of them was an American, really. He spoke English fluently. We were treated very well by the Japanese. We had no real complaint. The only thing was that toward the end of the six months or so that we were there, we were running out of liquor and it would have been pretty tough after that.



Q: How did they get you out?

BUTRICK: We were sent by train from Peking to Shanghai where we were supposed to take boats. As it happened we were in Shanghai for a couple of weeks before we were loaded on the boat to come back home.

While we were in Peking I had a Japanese language officer on my staff, Beppo Johansen, a very fine man. He followed the Japanese newspapers. The Counselor of the Japanese Embassy had made a cryptic speech to the Japanese and that speech was carried in the Japanese language paper. Beppo saw that and said, "This means war." So we immediately sent a triple priority telegram over the Marine radio to Washington indicating that this had happened and that Beppo thought this meant that war was imminent. About five days later we sent a follow up telegram at Beppo's request saying that war seemed certain in the very near future. So, as far as we were concerned, we were in the clear about notifying the Department.

But recently I attended a meeting of the Far East Group here in Washington and apparently there were all kinds of other warnings that had arrived in Washington that the war was imminent. But they stated that Roosevelt thought the war was going to start down around the Philippines and wasn't prepared for Pearl Harbor at all. But I sometimes wonder about that and maybe the American public in order to be thoroughly aroused had to have something like Pearl Harbor.

Q: It is one of the theories. I find it a little hard to think that we could orchestrate something like that. But certainly the Japanese did exactly the right thing to make us unite.

BUTRICK: At a terrible cost of American lives and equipment. But it did arouse the American people.

Q: My brother was on a battleship at Pearl Harbor.

BUTRICK: What happened?

Q: He is still alive. Well now, how did they get you out? You were down in Shanghai for a couple of weeks. This would be in 1942.



BUTRICK: We stayed in a hotel where all the heating arrangements had been taken out. We were shipped out of Shanghai on the Conte Verdi, an Italian ship with an Italian crew. We went as far as Singapore. The Italians were very nice to us. They made fun of the Japanese all the time. We had tea every day on board. We had a swimming pool. We were treated beautifully. In Singapore we joined with the Suna Maru, I think it was, coming from Japan. From then on we had a Japanese captain and no more swimming pool, no more tea, etc. So the trip from Singapore to Lourenco Marques wasn't all that wonderful, but it was all right. The Italian crew talked behind the backs of the Japanese. They didn't like the Japanese at all. And when the boat went back to Shanghai, the Italian crew sank it.

Q: What I gather was the Japanese diplomats were brought on the Gripsholm to Lourenco Marques and you came on the Italian ship and then there was an exchange.

BUTRICK: They took the Japanese back to Japan and then we came back to the United States on the Gripsholm. A number of our officers were transferred direct from Lourenco Marques to other posts.

Q: I remember talking to one person, I think it was Fred Hunt, who was left in Lourenco Marques.

BUTRICK: Yes, Fred Hunt was there as was Tom Weil. Tom was transferred to Australia I think.

Q: Then you came back to the United States in mid 1942. Was there much in the way of debriefing you?

BUTRICK: We were debriefed and had to write up reports. But I don't remember the details of that.

Q: How did they treat you once you were back?

BUTRICK: I think all of us had a "looking us over" period to see how we had come through all this. I don't remember exactly, I must have been assigned to the Far Eastern Division, I am not sure. I went on various trips like the one to reset up the Far Eastern offices. Went on a trip around South America with two other people...I was an inspector for a while too.

Q: You were sent to Santiago for a little while weren't you?



BUTRICK: I was assigned to Santiago as counselor. I was economic counselor, the political counselor outranked me at the post, although I outranked him in the Service. It was not a very happy arrangement. He tried to interfere in my economic affairs and I wouldn't allow him to. Of course, we had been carrying on economic warfare and all that sort of stuff.

Q: Could you explain a bit for somebody who wouldn't understand "economic warfare?"

BUTRICK: Well, we blacklisted some people who were still transacting with the Germans, etc.. Chile hadn't broken with the Germans at that time. We also didn't allow them to import things from the United States. We made sure that the German bank was in trouble as much as possible. As a matter of fact, some of our FBI got into their German bank and ransacked it one night.

Then all of a sudden...I think the Department or the Ambassador decided that the political counselor and I were just too much and decided to let me go and keep the political counselor. I can't think of his name right now but I got to know him very well. We became friends. While I was Director General I assisted him in getting an ambassadorship out in the Far East.

Q: Then you came back in 1944 as an inspector for a while.

BUTRICK: I was an inspector for a while and then had other odd jobs like that. I guess I was an inspector at the time I made the trip around South America, if I remember rightly.

That was an amusing trip. I had one man who was a professional from some firm in New York, and Walter Lavis, who was from the Bureau of the Budget. They were very critical of the Foreign Service, especially Walter Lavis. Among other things, you know, we used to get allowances for food or something of that sort, so we had to send in prices of various vegetables and things. So when we got down to Guayaquil, I thought these guys are always complaining about this so I'll let them do the pricing. So I said that tomorrow we would go to the market and price things. When we got to the market I said that I was not going in to oversee this. They would be completely on their own and could price anything they wanted to. I stayed outside and they hadn't been in very long before they both came out, as I thought they would. They had been bitten very badly by the fleas. I never heard any more about the price of foodstuffs.

Q: Then you came back to Washington and was working with administration from 1944-46.



BUTRICK: I was in charge of Administration for a short time. I don't remember how long it was. I was the head of the F.S. administration of the Department for maybe three or four months.

Q: Well it must have been a period of gearing up for the post-war period?

BUTRICK: I don't remember much about it at all.

Q: Was there any preparation for the Foreign Service Act of 1946, or did that come under somebody else?

BUTRICK: I don't remember.

Q: Then you went out to the Philippines.

BUTRICK: I went out to the Philippines as advisor to the President of the Philippines.

Q: Who was that?

BUTRICK: At the time I went out there the President was Manuel Roxas and the Vice President was Elpidio Quirino. I was actually attached to Quirino's office. He was also Secretary of Foreign Affairs. That was automatic in the Philippine government at that time. The Vice President was automatically head of foreign affairs.

Q: What were you doing?

BUTRICK: I was setting up a foreign service for the Philippine government. I also advised Quirino on various matters as he requested.

Q: What was your impression of how the Filipinos were going about this?

BUTRICK: They were very good and very efficient. I had very little dealings with Roxas himself. I think he sort of in a way resented me a bit, but with Quirino everything went along fine. We had a Naval man out there too. He and I were the only foreigners who were ever invited to all of the local parties where they really took their hair down and the women were present. The two of us were always invited to those parties, but no other foreigners.



I had a very good impression of the Filipinos, except, of course, there were an awful lot of crooks in the Philippines, everywhere. After I had been there several months, the wife of one of the men said to me, "You ought to stay here with us. If you stay here for a year you will be a millionaire." They were selling all the goods that were left over, all the war surplus American supplies. Some of those things were sold three or four times and everybody who bought them made a big profit on the resale. After she said that to me I decided it was time for me to get out. So at the very first opportunity when Quirino decided he wanted to make a trip around the world coming across the Pacific, I said I would go with him as far as the United States. By that time the Philippine foreign service had been thoroughly well organized. They had opened offices here in the United States and a few other places. Some of the men in my instruction class eventually became ambassadors.

So when we got back to the United States I severed my connections with the Philippines and went back to the Department.

But that was an interesting assignment. All of my assignments were interesting.

Q: Then you went to Iceland shortly thereafter?

BUTRICK: I went to Iceland as EE and MP and from there Jack Peurifoy, who was Under Secretary at the time, asked me to come into the Department and be Director General of the Foreign Service. I couldn't very well say no. I would have liked to have stayed in Iceland a little longer. I was only there for nineteen months.

Q: You were the Minister in Iceland. What were our major concerns there at that time?

BUTRICK: The major concern at that particular time was the airfield, Keflavik. It was a stopover point for our big planes going to Europe. We had to have a long runway and make sure that we could land there and refuel and go on. So that was the principal thing, but there were other things. American business was anxious to get in too. One of the American airlines went through there.

Q: How did you find dealing with the Icelandic government?



BUTRICK: The Icelandic government...I was dealing with the Minister, Bjarni Benediksson, in the Department of Foreign Affairs and going back and forth every week, sometimes twice a week. Our office was not very far from the Department of Foreign Affairs. I became very close to the man I dealt with on a regular basis. He didn't want me to leave when I left, he wanted me to stay on. He made a very nice speech at the time of my departure. He said, "In the nineteen months that Mr. Butrick has been here we have had more to do in foreign affairs than we had in the previous nineteen years." So we got along very well together.

I liked the Icelanders very much and apparently they liked me. They are a highly, highly independent people. You have to be terribly careful about everything there. Getting them to join NATO was a major problem. The party in power just barely had a majority in Parliament. So it had to be their idea. It couldn't be mine. I had to be very careful that joining NATO was entirely their idea. I was in the background. They would ask me a question and I would say, "I really don't know but will get in touch with Washington and find out." So I fed them the information, but I didn't force it on them at all. You had to be very, very careful with the Icelanders because of their love of independence. He also said that if Mr. Butrick ever felt that he was the representative of the most powerful nation in the world to the weakest nation in the world, I never noticed it. It was true, I had never put forth our power in any respect. I wonder if my successors have been equally as fortunate as I was.

Then the Parliament voted to join NATO and there was a great ruckus there with stones being thrown at Parliament. When the Prime Minister was coming out of the building some Icelandic woman spat right in his face. So the Foreign Minister called me about 6:00 that night and said, "Dick, I think I had better get out of the country as soon as possible. Can you get me out tonight?" I said, "I don't know, but I will be in touch." I called up the airfield. Fortunately I was on very good terms with the airfield people. They had an air sea rescue plane which was the only one they had capable of flying to the United States. It would have been a B-17. He called me back and said, "Yeah, we can take him, but not before 10:00 tonight. We have to get the plane set for the trip." I said, "That would be fine."

Then I called up Washington on the phone and got the night duty officer there. I told him what was happening and that the Foreign Minister was coming on a plane and would land in Springfield, Mass. I told him from then on it was up to him and he took over.

So he went to the United States on that plane and the man I talked to in the Department had a plane there to meet him in Springfield to bring him to Washington. He arrived there an hour before the meeting of NATO. So Iceland became a Charter Member of NATO by one hour.

Q: Then you were the Director General of the Foreign Service from 1949-52. You were there during McCarthyism weren't you?



BUTRICK: I don't remember it being a problem, so maybe it was over by that time.

Q: It may have been. What were your major concerns?

BUTRICK: Well, the major concerns were the Foreign Service, to preserve and protect it and make sure it had its rightful place in the Department's hierarchy. Of course, I also served as an advisor in foreign matters to Jack Peurifoy who was Deputy Under Secretary for Administration. His assistant was very nice. I had a very pleasant relationship. I had a small office and a couple of secretaries.

Q: Did you get involved in ambassadorial assignments?

BUTRICK: No, I didn't.

Q: That keeps moving from place to place. Did Congress call you up from time to time?

BUTRICK: No, it did not. I don't recall Congress ever calling me. However, Jack Peurifoy was in almost daily touch with various Congressmen.

Q: Then you went to Montreal.

BUTRICK: I went to Montreal. They offered me two different embassies, and this may seem a little strange to you, but my mother was a great influence in my life and she was ill and in a nursing home in my hometown of Lockport, N.Y. and I wanted to be near her. In order to be near her I took a demotion and went to Montreal as Consul General. I was promised, however, by Loy Henderson, that he would make me an ambassador at some later date.

I was happy in Montreal but I expected to be made an ambassador, but I never was. Instead of that I was transferred to Sao Paulo, probably the most important consulate general in the world. Did you know that Sao Paulo is the third largest city in the world? It wasn't then, but it is now, after Tokyo/Kyoto and Mexico City. New York is fifth and I think Seoul is fourth.

As Consul General in Montreal I was very well thought of there. One of the Montreallers said, "I have never seen an American who came to Montreal that so quickly adapted himself to Canadian customs as you have." But that was my whole life. I never wanted to force my ideas onto other people. Let them have their own civilizations the way they want them.



Q: How long were you in Sao Paulo?

BUTRICK: I was there until I retired. I also had a very nice assignment there. I moved our offices from a congested place downtown to a different area, as I had done in Montreal too. I don't have anything outstanding to say about Sao Paulo except that there were a lot of American business interests there. I was very close to the Chamber of Commerce. I attended all the meetings, etc. They still send me their bulletins and their year book.

Q: The Brazilians at that time felt very close to the United States and had sent a contingent into Italy during the war.

BUTRICK: As a matter of fact, wherever I have been I never had any difficulty with the local people at all. I took them for what they were and tried to adapt myself as much as possible to them. I think it is wrong to try to force our particular type of civilization onto other people. If they like us and want to model themselves after us, that is fine, but to try to force our civilization onto them I think is wrong.

Q: Then you retired when?

BUTRICK: I retired the first of September, 1959. I have been retired a long time.

Q: Well, I want to thank you very much for this.

BUTRICK: I retired at the age 65 because of my rank in the Service as Career Minister, but most people have to retire at 60.

Q: You came in before there was a Foreign Service and you left in 1959 and the Foreign Service started in 1946. In that period of time did you see any major changes?

BUTRICK: We became more active after the Foreign Service was organized. We were more aggressive. We were more self-assertive, I guess, which I always tried to avoid being. I think it is a big mistake myself, I don't know how it is today. I wouldn't want to put anything on the record about my feelings today.

Q: I was thinking more about the differences at the end of your career and the beginning of your career.



BUTRICK: I never thought of it that way. I thought I was in a career and I just went along and took what came. As a matter of fact I never pushed myself at any time for any job I got. I was often separated from my family - one time for over 15 months.

Q: I think this was really typical until quite recently. Well, I want to thank you very much.

BUTRICK: I am very happy to participate. It may interest you to know that after retirement I had bestowed upon me the following honors:

by Iceland: Grand Cross of the Order of Icelandic Falcon

by the Philippines: The Lakan of the Ancient Order of Sikatuna

Q: I think this was fascinating.

End of interview